
Clinical trial participation essential

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Michael J. Fox has an excellent - and somewhat pointed - Op-Ed in today's San Francisco Chronicle in which he points out that if people want cures, they need to participate in research. He says:

“ Today, America is waiting expectantly for a new generation of scientific breakthroughs - in cancer, AIDS, Alzheimer's disease and, of course, Parkinson's disease. Yet we've lost sight of a critical element of any success - our own active engagement in the process. He goes on to point out that 85 percent of clinical trials finish late because of trouble recruiting volunteers and nearly a third of all trials fail to recruit any patients at all. Case in point, Stem Cells Inc recently had to cancel their neural stem cell trial for the fatal childhood disorder Batten disease because they failed to recruit patients.

Fox goes on to say:

“ We're doing everything we can to identify and dismantle roadblocks that stand in the way of research progress. So far we've invested more than \$230 million in research to speed new and better treatments for the disease. But we've been aware for years that dollars alone won't solve this problem. In particular, money cannot buy the critical contributions made by clinical trial volunteers. At CIRM, that number is \$1.2 billion, but the sentiment is the same. The only way research we fund can eventually become widely available therapies is through clinical trials that prove that the approach is safe and effective.

CIRM just started funding clinical trials, with a \$25 million loan to Geron. We have 14 Disease Teams which are working toward clinical trials that they hope to start in 2013, and we have a new wave of Disease Teams coming down the pipeline. We look forward to working with patient advocacy groups to make sure those future trials are successful. In the mean time, if you or a loved one wants to participate in a clinical trial an excellent resource for finding those trials is the NIH clinical trials database: www.clinicaltrials.gov.

A.A.

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